



ACCESS CURRENTS

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U.S. Postal Service and GSA Adopt New Accessibility Standards

New accessibility standards adopted by the U.S. Postal Service and the General Services Administration (GSA) will soon govern the design of new or altered Federal buildings. The standards, which are based on guidelines the Board issued last July, contain updated provisions that improve accessibility while facilitating compliance. The adopted standards will apply to a wide range of Federal facilities under the purview of GSA, the Federal government's "landlord," and to postal facilities. The design and construction of new facilities, altered areas of existing facilities, and leased facilities will be subject to these standards in accordance with the Architectural Barriers Act, which ensures access to buildings that are federally funded.

The new standards will replace the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards for these two agencies and will take effect in six months according to notices the agencies will be issuing. Similar action by two other agencies, the departments of Defense (DOD) and of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), will update those standards covering the rest of the Federal sector, specifically military facilities and HUD-funded housing.

"This prompt action by GSA and the U.S. Postal Service will help ensure that the Federal government serves as a model of accessibility," noted Board Chair Jan Tuck. "Through its technical assistance and training programs, and its history of partnerships with other agencies, the Board stands ready to assist these agencies in implementing the standards." The Board has already helped train hundreds of facility personnel on the new standards at the U.S. Postal Service's eight facility service offices across the country and at its headquarters.

In addition to the Federal sector, the Board's guidelines will also serve to update standards for facilities in the private sector and state and local government sectors covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The Department of Justice and, in the case of transit facilities, the Department of Transportation, are responsible for updating the ADA standards.

Board to Hold Hearings on Draft Guidelines for Passenger Vessels

The Board will hold public hearings this summer in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. on guidelines for passenger vessels it is developing under the ADA. The hearings will focus on information the Board released last November, including draft guidelines for large vessels, such as cruise ships, and a notice outlining several different options on addressing access to smaller vessels, such as water taxis and excursion boats.

These hearings will allow interested parties to provide feedback on this material and follow-up to a similar forum held last January. At this earlier hearing, comment was received from the vessel industry and others on the need for more time to review the released information. In response, the Board extended the comment period four more months to July 28th and scheduled these additional hearings. The Los Angeles hearing will take place June 24th and the D.C. hearing will be held July 25th. For further information, contact Paul Beatty at (202) 272-0012 (v), (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or pvag@access-board.gov (e-mail). The materials on passenger vessels are posted on the Board's website at www.access-board.gov/news/pvag.htm.

Hearings on Passenger Vessels

June 24th 2 - 5
Beverly Hilton
Los Angeles, CA

July 25th 10 - 12
Marriott Metro Center
775 12th Street, NW
Washington, DC



Board Elects Chair; President Names New Board Members

Jan Tuck, an Access Board member from Marina del Rey, California, was elected chair of the Board at its March meeting. Tuck, appointed to the Board in 2002, has extensive experience in accessibility issues through her work at Princess Cruises, where she heads the accessibility compliance program. Tuck oversees access to Princess ships, as well as to affiliated hotels, tours, motor coaches, and rail cars. The company has a network of operations extending to six continents and nearly 260 ports around the world. Each year, the Board elects a new chair, as well as other officers. Tuck, who served as Chair in 2003, succeeds Emil Frankel, a Federal member representing the Department of Transportation.

President George Bush has appointed four new members to the Access Board: Tricia Mason of Cheyenne, Wyoming, Philip G. Pearce of College Station, Texas, Daniel O. Rios, P.E., of McAllen, Texas, and John O. Woods, Jr., P.E., of Alexandria, Virginia.



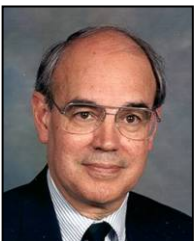
Mason is a Community Programs Specialist for the Wyoming Governor's Planning Council on Developmental Disabilities. She also serves as National President for Little People of America (LPA) a non-profit organization for individuals of short stature and their families. As LPA's representative, she is an active member of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A117.1 Committee, which maintains design standards for accessible buildings and facilities. She holds a degree in Textiles and Merchandising from the University of Wyoming.



Pearce is the owner and manager of Ready Access Services, LLC, an accessibility consulting firm in College Station, Texas. He was also recently appointed a member of the Texas Architectural Barriers Advisory Committee. He is a Registered Accessibility Specialist and an Accessibility Inspector/ Plans Reviewer. Previously, he served as Executive Director of the Texas 4-H Youth Development Foundation and with the Texas Cooperative Extension. He has extensive experience in corporate management, administration, and financial planning and accounting. Pearce earned a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Economics and a Master of Business Administration in Finance, both from Texas A&M University.



Rios is Senior Vice President at S&B Infrastructure, Ltd. in McAllen, Texas, a company that provides planning, engineering, and construction management. He oversees major transportation engineering projects throughout Texas and was previously employed by the Texas Department of Transportation. His experience in engineering design and construction management has included projects involving environmental analysis, roadway design and traffic planning, utility relocation, right-of-way mapping and property acquisition, and drainage design. Rios holds a degree in Civil Engineering from Texas A&I University.



Woods is President of Woods - Peacock Engineering Consultants, a firm he co-founded in 1999. He has over 30 years experience in structural engineering. Active in various professional, community and civic organizations, Woods has served as president of the Consulting Engineers Council of Metropolitan Washington, president of the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce, and is a director of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund. He was a member of the Commission for the Disabled in Alexandria and the Governor's Council for the Needs of the Handicapped. He graduated from The Citadel with a degree in Civil Engineering and earned a Master of Science at Duke University. Woods served in Vietnam as a U.S. Army helicopter pilot and was shot down in a rescue mission in 1967. He spent three years in rehabilitation as a result of the injuries he received.

The new appointees, who will be sworn in at the Board's next meeting on May 11th, succeed public members Marilyn Golden of Oakland, California, Marc Guthrie of Newark, Ohio, Kenneth Schoonover of Lansing, Illinois, and Soy Williams of Miami, Florida, each of whom served two terms on the Board. Public members of the Board are limited to two terms.



Courthouse Access Advisory Committee to Meet in May

The Courthouse Access Advisory Committee held its third meeting in Washington, D.C. on May 5th and 6th. As part of this meeting, committee members toured the D.C. Superior Court and Court of Appeals. In addition, committee members heard presentations on access to judicial proceedings for people who are hard of hearing or deaf. These briefings covered assistive listening systems, courtroom acoustics, and sign-language interpretation services.

The committee's charge centers on promoting access to courthouses, which pose unique design challenges, by identifying issues and barriers, developing solutions and best practices, gathering resources, and exploring ways to disseminate the information it develops most effectively to various audiences. The committee's members include designers and architects, disability groups, members of the judiciary, court administrators, representatives of the codes community and standard-setting entities, government agencies, and others with an interest in the issues to be explored. Information on this meeting and details for the next meeting, which is scheduled to be held August 4th and 5th in Chicago, will be posted on the Board's website. For further information, contact Elizabeth Stewart at (202) 272-0042 (voice), (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or stewart@access-board.gov (e-mail).

Tutorial on Accessible Telecommunication Products Available

A new web-based training course is available on ensuring access to telecommunication products under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, which requires access to electronic and information technologies procured by the Federal government. The course, the last in a series developed by the Board covering different aspects of its section 508 standards, is designed for those involved in the purchase or procurement of telecommunication products for Federal agencies. It covers all of the requirements that telecommunication products must meet, including those providing access for persons with hearing impairments.

Since issuing its standards for electronic and information technology, the Board has maintained a program of continuing on-line guidance and training on the requirements of the standards. Other section 508 tutorials in the series cover software applications and operating systems; desktop and portable computers; and self contained, closed products, such as information kiosks, calculators, and fax machines. The courses are part of the on-line "508 Universe" program provided on the www.section508.gov website. This site also provides other section 508 tutorials and resources.

New Voting System Guidelines to Cover Accessibility

New guidelines have been prepared for voting systems that, once finalized, will be available for states to use on a voluntary basis in complying with the Help America Vote Act. This law, which Congress passed in 2002 to prevent the types of ballot controversies that arose in the presidential election of 2000, calls for methods to improve the usability and reliability of voting systems used in Federal elections. Provisions in the law ensure that voting systems and polling places are accessible to people with disabilities, and also address ballot verification by voters, language barriers, and provisional voting.

The draft guidelines, which were unveiled at a public hearing organized by the Election Assistance Commission in Boston on April 26th, contain specific provisions for accessibility, as well as voting system usability, security, and privacy. The specifications address access to voting equipment for all types of users, including those with vision impairments. The guidelines will be reviewed by the Commission, which was established to implement the voting reforms of the act. In addition to overseeing the development of these guidelines, the Commission serves as a national resource for information on the administration of Federal elections, conducts studies on voting system improvements, and administers various grant programs funded by the law.

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Section 508 Tutorials www.section508.gov

- telecommunication products **NEW**
- software
- computers
- self contained, closed products
- web sites
- video & multimedia

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The law established several advisory bodies to assist the Commission in fulfilling its mission. The Access Board is represented on some of these panels, including the Technical Guidelines Development Committee, which drafted the new guidelines, and the Commission's Board of Advisors. Through their seats on these entities, Access Board members J.R. Harding, Ed.D. and James Elekes, M.Ed, MPA/CPM helped enhance the guidelines' coverage of accessibility. They submitted recommendations concerning the scope of the guidelines, the testing of voting system accessibility, and the process for amending the guidelines so that people with disabilities can vote in a manner that is convenient and private using systems that are reliably barrier-free. The released draft incorporates their recommendations on these and other topics.

"The Board is proud to have played a role in drafting these important guidelines which will ensure that all Americans, including those with sensory impairments, can exercise their right to vote with dignity and in privacy," noted Elekes. "The best way to make sure that the guidelines live up to this goal," according to Harding, "is to collect as much public input as possible; we look forward to the process ahead, which will do just that by inviting all interested persons to review and weigh in on the guidelines before they are made final." The Board encourages members of the public, including those with disabilities, to participate in this process to ensure the best possible voting system guidelines.

The Commission will review the guidelines and make them available for public comment in May for a period of 90 days. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is providing staff support in developing the guidelines, has posted the current draft and related materials on its website at <http://vote.nist.gov>. Informal feedback can be submitted to NIST by e-mail at vote@nist.gov pending the Commission's official release and public comment period. For further information on the Commission and the guidelines, as well as the Help America Vote Act, visit the Commission's website at www.eac.gov.

Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to news@access-board.gov or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.

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